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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LENT
AN EDITORIAL

Widely in the Christian world, there is an increasing interest in the observance of the Lenten Season; and this is true of the churches of the liberal Christian faith. There is an increased recognition of the value of an annual period of intensified culture of the spiritual life. Some of the ideas and practices which have long been connected with this season may profitably be laid aside, but the inmost significance of Lent is valuable in a high degree. The fact is widely recognized that the great festivals of the Christian year, Christmas and Easter, have an association with astronomy as well as with the beginning and the end of the life of Christ. We observe the birth of Jesus close to the beginning of the lengthening of the days when the winter solstice comes. We easily fix a date for Christmas.

Easter, however, requires a more extended calculation. We wait until the spring equinox, which is close to March twenty-first; then until the moon is full; and then until Sunday comes; and that Sunday is Easter Day. These can come close together or far apart. But when Easter Day is fixed, we count back to find the first day of Lent, commonly called Ash Wednesday. This year "day of penitence" falls on the seventh day of February. Palm Sunday falls on the eighteenth day of March, and Easter Day on the twenty-fifth day of March. So the whole lenten season comes early.

In the course of the year, it is well to cultivate a clearer consciousness of the presence of God, when we venture to trust those impulses which bid us believe in the eternal realities of the things of the spirit.

There are people who are able, by a strong effort of the will, to turn from the engrossment of the material world to the deeper realities of life. But most of us need a "discipline of devotion." It is wholesome to use such an aid. Happily a "Lenten Manual" comes annually from our denominational headquarters. The first of these manuals was published in 1938; and so it is a well established practice to publish these annuals. This year the manual should be of deep interest to the people of our liberal fellowship.

The material is chosen, with rare insight, from the works of James Martineau, a great religious liberal of England of a past generation. Martineau did much to stimulate the spiritual life of people of his generation; and his influence continues to be powerful. The work of compiling this manual has been done by one of our ministers, John Wallace Laws. He certainly has searched widely and dug deeply to bring together material of such excellence, and such appropriateness for the Lenten Season. Published by our Beacon Press, it is easily available, and deserves to be in the hands of, and to be used by, the people of our fellowship. We welcome heartily this new Lenten Manual and commend it unreservedly.

H. H. S.

First Installment of An Article By

REV. HARRY C. MESERVE
Minister, First Unitarian Society, San Francisco, Calif.

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

nes 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

One of the age-old controversies the Christian religion revolves ound the question of what the dis-guishing mark of a Christian real-is. Is it assent to a specific body beliefs? Is it faithful participation the rituals and sacraments of the urch? Is it acceptance of the liter-truth of every word of the Bible? it a particular view of the person d nature of Jesus, the acknowl-gment of his divinity or his aton-death? Or are all these things ondary to something else? Is a ristian a person who is something, ther than one who assents to mething? Is Christianity a matter what you believe, or of what you and what you do?

Signs of this controversy are not rd to find within the New Testa-nt. One sign is the mood and itude of Jesus himself as it is forth in the gospels. It is hard think that this man with his pas-n for inner integrity, his deep un-rstanding of the devious ways of human mind and heart, his dis-e of all merely external form and ow in religion, could ever have de-ed religion as merely the accept-e of a doctrine or obedience to institution. Another sign is the esence of the Epistle of James, ich frankly takes the position—ntrary to the great apostle, Saint ul, and to what was apparently e trend within the Church—that th without works is dead.

The Church solved this controver-by deciding in the fourth century at, the gospels and James to the ntrary, Christianity was the ac-ptance of a definite set of beliefs out Jesus. All who accepted this

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doctrine were Christians; all who refused to accept it were not Christians. Those who did not see it this way were heretics, though in terms of moral life and the virtues of love and pity, justice and truth they might be people of noble and heroic qualities. Dante, a poet of deepest vision and compassion, nevertheless found it necessary to consign to one of the better circles of hell all the great and good, the wise and loving of pre-Christian or non-Christian cultures. Luther, the great reformer, was outraged, at the thought that Christianity could be seen as a matter of being and doing, rather than as a matter of belief. His judgment upon the Epistle of James which challenged his view was that it was "an epistle of straw."

The controversy has continued into modern times. It is impossible for certain religious groups, including the Unitarians and Universalists, to be members of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America or the World Council of Churches because these bodies define Christianity as "acceptance of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour." The

Federal Council itself has been split because of the formation of a new council which adds to the definition of Christianity the necessity of belief in the literal inspiration and truth of the whole Bible.

A member of the Society of Friends recently told me of a conversation he had had with an orthodox minister in which the minister expressed regret that the Quakers were sending "calves and not Christ to Europe." He was referring to the program of the Friends and Brethren Service Committees which has been transporting heifers to the farmers of Europe to help them replace the herds destroyed in the war.

By and large, this formalistic, external definition of Christianity as the acceptance of a certain set of beliefs has been one of the major factors in some of the most disgraceful chapters in the history of Christianity. For the sake of this definition, heretics and so-called heathens, Jews, and free-thinkers were tortured by the Church, until, maddened and weakened with pain, they either died or—to save their lives—gave their assent to Christian doctrines. Decent, law-abiding, charitable people were driven from their homes, persecuted, relieved of their property, and exiled because Christianity was a doctrine, and not a way of life. The scandalous divisions of the contemporary Protestant churches, which have rendered them a nonentity as a spiritual force in the modern world, are likewise traceable to this narrow and limited definition of what Christianity is. Nothing in the history of the Christian churches makes more terrible reading than the story of what Christians have done to one another, to their spiritual parents, the Jews, and to the non-Christian majority of the human race in the name of that kind of Christianity which is formal verbal assent to a doctrine. The result is that the story of the development of the Christian churches and of the so-called Christian nations is as bloody a tale of bigotry, inhumanity, and cruel intolerance as you can find anywhere in the annals of the human race. If you are interested in one part of this tale, you should read a recent book by a Scotch Catholic, Malcolm Hay, which records in objective, scholarly fashion the deliberate promotion of anti-Semitism by the Christian churches from the first century to the present. It is an eye-opener—and a devastating one—for it makes plain that the Nazis learned a good part of their anti-Semitic theory and some of their practical techniques from no less an authority than the Christian Church itself. It may well be that one of the reasons why the people of Asia have, on the whole, shown no great excitement about the opportunity to become Christians, is that they are not at all sure that becoming Christians—in the formal definition of it—will in any way improve upon their own faiths or make them any less the prey of the exploitation and greed which have so often gone hand-in-hand with the extension of Christian civilization.

It would be unkind and untrue to pretend that there are not millions of persons within the Christian Churches that define Christianity as primarily doctrine and belief, who do see the gravity of this problem and who, for themselves, define Christianity as a way of life characterized by love, tolerance, respect for human dignity, and for the rights and needs of other people. There are many such. But we are reaching a point where a new and deeper definition of Christianity must be found if the Christian churches are to regain their lost radiance and their ebbing power to win the minds and loyalties of men to better ways of thought and life.

U. C. FELLOWSHIP CONTRIBUTES TO DENOMINATIONAL ADVANCE

The Unitarian Christian Fellowship proudly but humbly observes a most unusual one half year anniversary under a new policy inaugurated by its Executive Committee last September for accentuating the positive side of Unitarian Christianity.

During the short span of less than one half year the following significant achievements have been realized. Firstly, a magazine which has received nation wide commendation has been published with remarkable increase in circulation and reader interest. The Unitarian Christian is emphasizing a gospel for which Unitarians are hungry and which in the course of this mechanistic and materialistic age is often overlooked, the spiritual power of the Unitarian message. Secondly, the Fellowship studied the all important administrative problem of ministerial recruitment by inviting Rev. Duncan Howlett, minister of The First Church in Boston, to present and discuss his study, "Standards For the Unitarian Ministry." Thirdly, the Fellowship gathered at the Second Church in Boston to hear their new Editor, Rev. Heinz Rettig, minister of the First Religious Society Newburyport, Massachusetts, preach a sermon pronouncing the Fellowship's aspirations on the spiritual horizon of Unitarianism. Fourthly, a nation wide essay contest for Unitarian youth was successfully concluded, the winning essays to be published in a near future issue of The Unitarian Christian after the prize winners read their essays. Finally, and most important for the upbuilding of Unitarian denomination wide advance the Fellowship initiated the sponsorship of a series of April meetings in Boston where the Rev. Dr. Preston Bradley of the Peoples' Church in Chicago will be the speaker. Further details on this vitally important event will be published next month but this much bears noting in every reader's engagement book. Dr. Bradley will speak in the evenings of April 23, 24 and 25th at the Arlington Street Church, Boston. Other speaking engagements are being made for him but these three are the key dates for Unitarians in the area of Boston and as far away as transportation allows. The occasion will give Boston and vicinity its much needed touch of liberal evangelism. The President of the American Unitarian Association will introduce Dr. Bradley.

The question is now before all who have held mental reservations as to the worth and place of the Unitarian Christian Fellowship in the denomination, "Is The Fellowship Worth Supporting?"

Will you write your answer on the attached application by signing your name and indicating the extent of your support, a one dollar subscription only, a two dollar regular membership or a sustaining membership with contribution.

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THE NATURE OF GOD

by
REV. CARL A. SEAWARD
Minister, Christ Church
Dorchester, Mass.

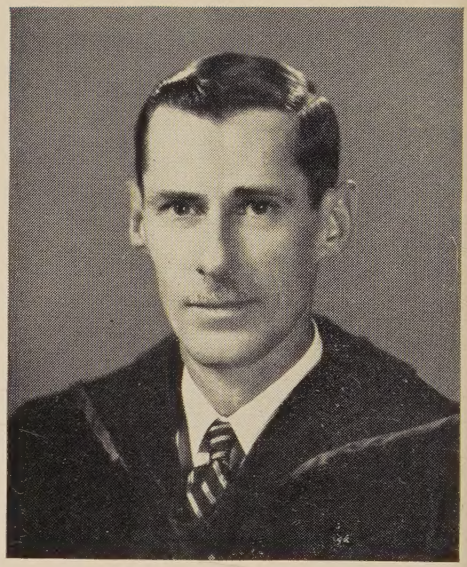
It was amazing that in his time—nearly two thousand years ago—Jesus held such a lofty conception of God that he spoke of the character of deity in these words, "God is a spirit." He made the nature of God clear and simple in primitive Christianity. However, those who followed him in history often beclouded and confused the nature and meaning of God. And even today, with the advance of science and learning, some churches maintain very unrealistic ideas about the Creative Power or Spirit in the Universe.

The Liberal view of God is a flexible one—one that has changed with new revelation of the nature of the universe and the nature of man. As man has grown out of paganism so God has grown out of it, too, in the minds of the enlightened in the free and liberal churches.

Yet, within any one congregation in a liberal church there is no unanimity as to the nature of God. As Paul E. Johnson has stated it in his book, "Psychology of Religion," "Each thinker may wrestle with the glory of God and discover for himself a conviction of personal experience. And together seekers for God have learned much from social experiences, from scientific experiment and systematic philosophy."

Individualists who insisted on thinking out religious ideas for themselves, such as the Socinians (pioneers of Unitarianism), refused to fall in line with Calvinism and its Trinitarian God. The Socinians doubted eternal punishment and refuted the idea that men were born in sin. They renounced the idea of predestination and furthered the idea that all men are able to work out their own salvation according to their beliefs and deeds.

At the time of the birth of democracy in France and America, men



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began, increasingly, to think out their own ideas about the nature of God, independent of church aid and the creeds. In a chapter, "The Character of God," in his volume, "The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas" Arthur McGiffert asserts: "As democratic ideals crowded out the aristocratic and authoritarian ideals of an earlier day, of course, the character of God appeared in a different perspective."

So it does in the fold of democratic liberal religionists. In the eighteenth century liberalism the whole idea of God was reconstructed back to the pattern of primitive Christianity—back to the emphasis upon the love of God, so widely lost in the Catholic and orthodox churches. The Unitarians preached a God of benevolence working in the hearts of men and nations in the form of humanitarianism—deeds of love, God's spirit of love put into human relations. As benevolence, kindness, sympathy, and social service became cardinal virtues among men, they became prominent in men's picture of God. Where did such good qualities come from? Of course, from the Creative Force of the Eternal Good-

ss. We cannot grow if the Creative irit of the Universe is not growth: e cannot see if there is no Light the Universe; we cannot love if ere is no source of love in the niverse; we cannot think unless ere is some point of origin of our inking in a Supreme Mind in the niverse.

But even Unitarians differ about e modus operandi and the nature a God of humanitarianism. We ve Humanists who say that man all there is to God. We have anscendentalists who say God nscends man in a super realm. e have apostles of Naturalism who im that religious truth is not in pernatural revelation but is re-aled in nature. There are those o speak of Divinity of God in n.

There are many views about the ture of God. Certainly you have e. How clear is it? James Bissett tt, in his book, "The Religious nsciousness," tells of a deacon who s asked by his minister in a pray-meeting as to his notion about l. The candid deacon replied that idea of God was "a kind of an ng blur."

Certainly, it is difficult to explain nature of the Creative Power. To ny, the word God creates a pic-e of an oblong blur. The problem lescription and definition of God baffled the greatest of theolo-ns and philosophers. Why try to cribe God in detail, as is done, for mple, in the Catholic catechisms the Apostles' Creed of the ortho-churches? Isn't it sufficient to ak of the Eternal Power in the n employed by Jesus: "God is a it"? I like to use the term Eter-Spirit. Kirtley Mather, Harvard ntist, calls God, the "Supreme ninistration." Another speaks of as Love. In other words, we give ibutes of mind and spirit to God but no physical characteristics whatever.

The most important contribution of modern times to an understanding of the Mysterious Source of All Life was made by Ritschl, a German theologian, who not only interpreted God as Love but, also, as the spirit of love among men. He says that the divine love of God eventuates in active social service. Isn't that what Jesus meant in urging the Kingdom of God on earth—the spirit of God put to use in human relations? Said Richtl, "Therein, that we in the Kingdom of God love our brethren is the love of God realized."

Today, we of the free faith worship God as Love, spirit and truth. Like Jesus, we see God's will and goodness revealed not only in the outward manifestation of it in a beautiful and bountiful Nature and a Universe of Law and Order, but in our own inner divinity and in the love which culminates in humanitarian service or brotherhood in relation with one's fellowmen.

God is a Spirit. Let us serve that Spirit in good spirit and truth!

A FEW CAN DO IT!

A relatively small number of devoted, loyal workers might determine the difference between life and death for America. Lenin, who brought the Communist regime to power in Russia, gave testimony to this fact when he was asked what it was that helped the Reds most in achieving their goal. **"The infirmity of our enemies,"** was his prompt reply. **"If there had been in Petrograd in 1917 only a group of a few thousand men who knew what they wanted, we would never have come to power in Russia."**

(Contributed)

THE GOD I KNOW

By Rev. Preston Bradley, D. D.
Minister, The People's Church
Chicago, Illinois

(Concluding Installment)

When God witnessed the beautiful qualities of Man, His creation, He must have said to Himself, "See, I told you I had faith in him. See what he can do! My Son, my Son!" And, cried God, "Look what you can do with life! Now that you have gone out into the fields of Science you can fly like a bird and swim like a fish; you can press a button and light a continent, you can whisper and be heard around the world. Now that you have annihilated space, there are no mountains, no seas. You have made a conquest of time!" God must have had some happy times when He thought of Man's achievements.

Then God must have wept, too. I think God must be weeping now. Science, wealth, brains, conquest of nature, ability to live longer than man ever lived, a universe in which we are discovering element after element, and Man, with all this, trembling, frightened, despairing, resigning himself and saying, "This is inevitable, that is inevitable. I am caught, a prisoner. I cannot break these bonds. I cannot construct a just society. God must be passionately weeping as He looks down upon His world today, and I can hear Him say after He has witnessed all the tragic sight in Man's hands, "A universe! it is his, and he cannot find a way to live together with dignity!" Poverty, war, corrupt leadership, mediocre diplomacy, self interest, unwarranted nationalisms, all of these stare at Him.

The God I know is getting ready to do something about it, very soon. God loves humanity. He loves Mankind,—me, you, all, sinner and saint, illiterate and educated, black and white, Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant. God loves you. We are all God's Children,—that simple, old-fashioned truth that you have heard repeatedly. We have to say it again now, and with new significance. We are God's children, the product of His plans. And do you know, He loves us with a love that transcends the parental love of earth.

There is a father listening to me now, many a father. Perhaps you have a wayward son. Perhaps he has broken your heart, disgraced your name and dragged it into the mud, but he's your son. You love him and you wont stop at anything to get that boy straightened out. All right. The love of God transcends earthly love. God is our Father. We are bad children, we are guilty of the whole category of crime, but, I say, God loves us and He loves us so much that He will do again what He has done before in human history.

He did it once when they said the flood waters of the earth would destroy Man, but there was a remnant left and humanity was not destroyed. He loved us once so much that He said, "I am not going to let you destroy yourselves! You are my children, and I will send your Brother to die on the cross for His teachings to you! That's how much I love you!"

He still loves us, and He is getting ready to part the green curtains of the nation's diplomats. He will walk out again, and say to Humanity, "I love you. I love you so much that I will blast the mind of the scientists and they will never make a hydrogen bomb. I will smite into impotency those who stand for war and power and force!"

My friends, "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. He plants His foot on the sea and rides upon the storm!" If you doubt that, wait and see!

BOOK REVIEW

OUT OF MY LATER YEARS

By Albert Einstein

Reviewed by Rev. A. R. Shelander

These opinions of Albert Einstein a variety of subjects, serve as an portant, though fragmentary, case tory of the mental processes of of the greatest scientists of all ie. Religious leaders will be parlarly interested in his comments the problem of the relationship ween science and religion. To the comfiture of those who would stitute science, or scientism, for gion, Einstein says: "The realms religion and science are clearly rked off from each other; neverless there exist between the two ong reciprocal relationships." 26.) His definition of science as e attempt at the posterior reconuction of existence by the process conceptualization," (p. 24.) will et with general approval. The ne cannot be said for his definin of religion which he equates with litarian ethics. He maintains that e concept of a personal God . . . the main source of the present- conflicts between the spheres of gion and science" (p. 27.); and refore should be given up by chers of religion "in their strug- for the ethical good." (p. 28.)

This view of religion is consistent h philosophical naturalism (the ount of nature as known through se perception and reasoning,) ch apparently serves as Einin's frame of reference. But it is consistent with religion (the ac- nt of man's inner life, of history, l of nature, as known through the erience of living.) Einstein errs assuming that the highest form belief in a personal God is merely sublimation" of primitive contions. The higher forms of religdiffer from primitive forms of religion quite as much as the higher forms of science differ from primitive forms of science. Furthermore, the transition from primitive forms to higher forms, both in religion and in science, is due, not to "sublimation," but to revelation which Whitehead says "is the primary characterization of all knowledge." Both in religion and in science we can understand only that for which we have the necessary maturity and preparation. Neither failure to understand the highest form of religion, nor the fact that it cannot be expressed in terms of physical concepts, is an argument against its validity. Physicists employ absolutes, or constants (c, e, m, h, et al.) Without these no further progress in physics would be possible. The ten commandments serve as a fair sample of ethical absolutes, or constants. In the highest form of religion the personal God of Righteousness, Love, and Truth, whose authority transcends all other forms of authority, figures as the one Absolute. He is thought of as being in-and-through-all and at the same time over-and-above-all. Tragedy results when human beings place self-advancement above obedience to God's Truth and Right as revealed in conscience.

Einstein, like many other scientists, is a frightened man. He declares that "one who thinks about the future must live in fear and terror." (p. 11.) His one hope of salvation lies in socialism (social planning) and a World Government; but he is afraid these will result in enslavement rather than in general well-being, men being what-they-are. There he stops, and there science stops; because "for the scientist

there is only 'being' but . . . no good or evil, and no goal." (p. 114.) "The scientific method furnishes means to realize goals, but it cannot furnish goals." (p. 113.) It is at this point that religion takes over. The founder of Christianity, which is the most advanced form of religion on our planet, has given us the formula for transforming this world of hatred, want, and woe, into a paradise of harmony, plenty, and ineffable joy, by transforming each human being from a beast of prey into a benefactor—from an animal into an angel, through the birth in each human heart of the Spirit of God—not by the adoption of a new theory. This new birth has the effect of transforming man's natural ill-will toward those who do not serve him into good-will (love) toward all, even toward enemies. The author of the Fourth Gospel reports Jesus as having said: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." (John 13:34.) The meaning of this is made clear in a letter by the same author which reads: "God is love . . . If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:8, 16.) The highest form of religion, therefore, is more than ethics. And it is not confined to what we discover through sense perception and reasoning. Spiritual perception is as much a fact as sense perception. As we learn to know the nature of the sun through sense perception of the warmth and light which radiate from it, and in no other way, so we learn to know the nature of God through spiritual perception of the warmth of love and the light of truth which radiate from Him. Incidentally, the Christian formula for transforming the world is also the formula for the control of atomic energy in the interests of human well-being. It needs only to be implemented in order to become effective in world affairs, even as Einstein's formula for atomic energy had to be implemented to become effective.

Lenten Prayer

Spirit Divine, the flame within our souls, teach us how to look to the inmost place of thy presence. Open our eyes to thy revelation of thyself in our inner life. Give us confidence that there we shall see that light which lighteth every man coming into the world. Give us grace to guard that precious flame that it may burn eternally.

O Lord our God, in whom we live and move and have our being grant that the nearness and custom of thy presence may not hide thee from our eyes. Take from our minds all fear of the future, and all distrust of thy care for thy children. Teach us to be anxious for nothing, but to trust thy guidance for all the years that are to come.

Within our living spirits, O God, establish thy kingdom, that we may see it by the power of inner vision. And help us to pray in faith that thy kingdom may come in the earth. Help us, in our daily tasks, to serve thine eternal will, and build thy kingdom. So shall we be faithful disciples of our Master. Amen.

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APPLICATION

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THE CHRISTIAN REGISTER

This month the ex-administrator of Point IV discusses one of the most constructive foreign policy programs ever initiated by our government. Major James Mayo, a Negro chaplain in the Air Forces, looks at the new non-segregation program from both sides of the fence. Field Representative for CARE, Charles Joy brings back the tragic story of the Spanish refugees living in France. Illustrated with pictures of some of the children Dr. Joy knew, the article pulls at the conscience of everyone who was once concerned with the fight for democracy in Spain. You will probably enjoy reading the unpleasant things Floyd H. Ross has to say about our theological schools and the men who go into them, and you will certainly not want to miss the reports of the AUA Board Meeting and the new plan for revision of the By-Laws in the News Section. In an attempt to trim corners, we're printing less extra copies of the REGISTER—so if you want additional copies, write quickly!

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